

EE British Academy Film Awards in 2013 – Winners Press Conference: Film

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Congratulations, Ben -- double congratulations!

BEN AFFLECK: Thank you very much.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Gentlemen, because I know that everyone here has a question for you, I am just going to ask you very, very quickly of all three of you --

BEN AFFLECK: After Daniel Day-Lewis's interview, you had a lot of walk outs.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: He said some pretty incendiary things, I have to say.

What does this mean to you?

GEORGE CLOONEY: Oh, it's unbelievable. I've never won one!

BEN AFFLECK: Yeah, no, it's fabulous. I mean, it's thrilling. Like, what I sort of stumbled through at the end of the Pictures piece, just so say, like, we -- you know, it's -- we feel so grateful. We have never -- I've never been here, you know what I mean?

BAFTA, even nominations have been rare for folks, so to actually win feels incredibly welcoming and exciting and new. And, you know, everyone understands what -- how seriously folks take this and what a big honour it is.

GEORGE CLOONEY: Yeah, it's a thrill. I mean, honestly, it's -- it's just a thrilling night for us because, you know, this is a film -- when you work on films, all you are trying to do is make a film as best as you can, and sometimes you succeed and sometimes you don't, and sometimes they are appreciated and sometimes they are not, and to have everything sort of collide together at the same time, and to be able to do it with two people that I really admire, was -- it's just -- I can't tell you what a thrill it is that the British Academy gave us tonight. It's a thrill.

GRANT HESLOV: And, you know, when you watch the opening of the show tonight and you see all those amazing films, to be part of that, part of that legacy, I feel great.

Q. Let us start with some questions. Over here, please, in the second row.

Q. Hi, I am (inaudible) from Bloomsbury News, and this film has some significance because I am of Iranian origin. So I was curious to know, Ben Affleck, how you approached -- first of all, why are you interested in Iran, why did you become interested in this story and how you found the Iranian cast and gave the movie the Iranian --

BEN AFFLECK: Yeah, I'll try to answer that stuff. I became interested in it because it was a really good script that these guys had developed, and it happened to dovetail with an area of interest of mine, which is the Middle East, which includes -- of course, technically includes Iran, although obviously there are differences between Iran and the Arab Middle East. And so I thought, well, I have something to bring to this movie which is a sort of knowledge base, you know, around this stuff, and I was very excited about it. And it turned out -- I was originally going to find Persians who spoke Farsi in Turkey, and we went to Turkey and no one would do it. Like, the few Persians that we found were afraid to be in the movie because they were afraid of reprisals against their family back in Iran, and George was like, you know, there are a LOT of Persians in LA so we went back to LA and, low and behold, there was this massive community of Persians; Farsi speaking Persians, people who were doing theatre, people who were doing film, people who could step in ready to go and we didn't have to explain anything to them.

Out of that, but even more important and more profound, was so many people who were part of

this movie had gone through the experience of fleeing Iran and they would share with the crew, with us, with everybody: this is what happened to my father when he was taken, this is how we escaped the country, this is what happened to people still living there. So it informed -- people's real lives and real struggles informed that.

In terms of politics of the movie, I didn't want to do anything editorially didactic. I wanted to lay the facts out and let people draw their own conclusions from there.

Q. Ben, you have been obviously in front of the camera, you have been behind the camera, you were nominated for both today. Which one do you think means the most to you? Obviously you have won for directing for Best Film but, you know, acting or directing; which one is the biggest draw?

GEORGE CLOONEY: Which of your children do you love most?

BEN AFFLECK: Exactly. Well, I can tell you which of my children I had a hope for today. I didn't -- I think the Vegas odds on me winning over Daniel Day-Lewis was something like 400,000 to one. There was a better chance of the Earth revolving in a different direction -- oh, higher? Okay, thank you, sir.

GEORGE CLOONEY: We have time for one more question.

BEN AFFLECK: In truth, I love to act and I love to be directing. Filmmaking does not, like, that is one of the things that I really was inspired by by these guys, because they never put these, sort of, boundaries or definitions on filmmakers. The two of them go out, develop movies, produce movies, direct movies, act in movies. They are filmmakers and they work in all those different spheres and that is really appealing to me; to be able to try to do all those different things.

Q. Obviously, Ben, you are taken very seriously as a director now and you have been for a while. But when you have been, sort of, a mainstream leading man is it harder or easier because of that to then be taken seriously when you choose to direct?

A. I think, you know, probably people are sceptical to a certain degree of actors, like, across the border when they try to do things that are more serious so you have to prove yourself, like you have to prove yourself in life. Maybe that is not entirely inappropriate. You know, I was in some situations, I got, sort of, overexposed and had probably a little more bumps than usual so I had a little bit more of a way to go. So, you know, to this business you are always proving yourself. The next movie out you start at zero, you have nothing, it could be a disaster, you know? That's, you know, you just start at the beginning again and that is part of the thrill.

Q. I have one for Grant and George here, and maybe Ben as well. What can you tell us about The Monuments Men and how is that going and why isn't Ben involved?

GEORGE CLOONEY: Ben is too young, that's the truth, he is actually too young. It is going great, we have been in Berlin for about six weeks now prepping it so we start in about a month. So we are a wreck from tiredness.

Q. I am curious which movies you are drawing on because it reminds me a lot of my favourite movies?

GEORGE CLOONEY: Well, you know, look. There is all those elements of the films that I grew up with and you are too young to have grown up with but, you know, there is also other films that we looked at. We look at, you know, obviously you look at films like A Bridge Too Far, you know, The Longest Day and films like that. But also there is a little Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid in it and there's a little Catch 22; that is, kind of, the fun of it, we hope.

Q. He is actually 53, you know.

GEORGE CLOONEY: Really?

Q. He is older than he looks.

BEN AFFLECK: It is the British food; it keeps you healthy.

Q. This young chap here is fantastic.

Q. Congratulations on your award. Why do you think it is important for young people like me to watch a range of films and where will you keep your award?

GEORGE CLOONEY: Listen, pal, you are too young to watch this film. Why is it important? You know, listen, I'll tell you why, because here is three guys up here who at your age were sitting in front of a television or sitting at the movie theatres and we were inspired at your age to want to be part of storytelling, because that is all it is. It's as much doing a show in your living room for your parents as it is, you know, as it is making a film. They are really very similar and we are not all of us, you and I really, all that far apart in your mentality and age, you know? We are still kids. So, yeah, you want to watch these -- I don't know if you can watch this film -- but you want to watch films and love them and be inspired to do it, if that is what you want to do.

Q. And where are these going, these awards?

GEORGE CLOONEY: In the hotel in Berlin.

BEN AFFLECK: Mine are not going to Berlin.

GRANT HESLOV: For six months.

BEN AFFLECK: I hope not. If I am sleeping in hotel rooms in Berlin something bad has happened.

GEORGE CLOONEY: You got older fast!

BEN AFFLECK: Mine is going home with me and my wife.

Q. On that night I am going to say, Argo, enjoy yourselves guys. Give it up, have a guide night.

(End of press conference)